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Religiosity and music copyright theft: a study among Canadian Baptist youth

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**Religiosity and music copyright theft: a study among Canadian Baptist youth****Abstract**

This study examines the views of 706 Canadian Baptist youth (between the ages of 14 and 18 years) on the moral issue of music copyright theft, and explores the influence on these views of age, sex, Sunday church attendance, personal prayer, personal Bible reading, and conservative Bible believing. The participants were attending Springforth 2005 (a major Canadian Baptist youth conference). The data demonstrate a high level of acceptance of music copyright theft, with only 26% of the participants agreeing that downloading copyright music from the internet without paying is always wrong. Employing multiple regression modelling, the data demonstrated that, as Canadian Baptist youth mature (grew older), as they became more familiar with Bible teaching (through frequent reading of the scriptures), and as they became more integrated within the community of faith (through frequent Sunday church attendance), so they take a tougher line against music copyright theft.

*Keywords: Canadian, Baptist, Youth, Music Copyright*

### Introduction

Illegal file sharing and illegal downloading of copyrighted materials are now issues of considerable concern within the field of intellectual property law and practice (Liebowitz, 2006; Clark, 2007; Helmer & Davies, 2009). With the rise of the personal computer in the 1990s and broadband internet access becoming increasingly available, illegal downloading of copyrighted music had become common at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For example, writing in *Time Magazine*, Grossman (2003) estimated that each month more than 2.6 billion files (both music and movies) were being downloaded illegally. In 2002, the Recording Industry Association of America, a trade organization which represents major music companies issued a “Mid-year Snapshot of the Music Industry” that demonstrated how illegal music downloads were having a profound effect upon the music industry. At mid-year 2002 the number of titles that sold more than 1 million copies compared to mid-year 2001 decreased from 37 to 20, and total music shipments decreased 10.1% in the same period. Rob and Waldfogel (2006) reported that revenues in the music industry in the United States of America shrank 16% between 2001 and 2003. Similarly, Chiou, Huang, and Lee (2005) reported that worldwide sales of recorded music fell by 7% in value and 8% in units in 2002 compared with 2001. Wang, Chen, Yang, and Farn (2009) reported that music CD sales in Taiwan during 2004 were one-third of the level in 1997. On 15 February 2012 *RnBXclusive*, a popular music website was shut over allegations that it offered illegal downloads that cost musicians £15million a year. The website’s homepage carried a message from the Serious Organised Crime Agency warning that users of the site could face up to ten years in jail and an unlimited fine if they had used it to download material.

While it appears that all age groups have been involved in illegally downloading copyrighted music, the practice occurs more often among younger people than those who are older. In a May 9, 2010 *The New York Times* article, Joseph Plambeck (2010) reported that

the adult market “is less inclined to illegally download music and more inclined to buy a CD. This is especially true for baby boomers. According to the NPD Group, a market research firm, ‘people 50 and older buy 16 percent of all albums and singles but buy 28 percent of all the physical music sold.’ This research echoes Bhattacharjee, Gopal, and Sanders (2003) who reported that young adults exhibit a stronger tendency to pirate pop music than adults, and Rainie, Fox, and Lenhart (2000) who reported that the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that half of those who have illegally downloaded music are between 18 and 29 years of age.

The scholarly community has undertaken research to probe the influences, motivations, and attitudes of individuals toward illegal music downloading. Forester and Morrison (1994) noted that IT crime is looked upon in a less serious manner, both from an ethical and legal perspective, than other crimes. Freestone and Mitchell (2004) found that only 5% of Generation Y consumers surveyed believed that “downloading music files from the Internet for free” was wrong. Chiou, Huang, and Lee (2005) reported that attributive satisfaction, perceived prosecution risk, magnitude of consequence, and social consensus were important in influencing attitudes and behaviours toward illegal music downloading. Doane (2006) reported that household income and educational attainment were both negatively correlated with illegal music downloading. Cronan and Al-Rafee (2007) reported that attitude, past piracy behaviour, and moral obligation were major influences on why individuals pirated music. Wang, Chen, Yang, and Farn (2009) discovered that the higher a young person’s “idolatry” or idolizing of a singer or group, the more inclined they were illegally to download that artist’s or group’s music.

There is already some evidence that the moral and ethical issues raised by illegal file sharing and illegal downloading of copyrighted material is attracting attention within the Christian community and among theologians. For example, Jamieson (2006) undertook a

careful analysis of the theological and ethical issues raised by such activities in a paper entitled ‘Thou shalt not share? An ethical analysis of peer-to-peer file sharing’. In this perceptive analysis, Jamieson avoids any simplistic interpretation of the eighth commandment within the Mosaic decalogue (You shall not steal, Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:19) by locating this teaching within a broader biblical view of creation, personal property, stewardship, and covenant relationship. On the basis of this analysis he concludes as follows:

Although the specific terms and conditions of copyright law are debatable, to the extent that the law maintains the balance between the interests of creators and consumers in a fair and just manner, the law is biblical. Therefore, music, movies, and other media that are under the rightful protection of copyright law cannot be ethically shared or obtained through peer-to-peer file sharing. (Jamieson, 2006, p.105)

A long tradition of empirical research has demonstrated the connection between religious beliefs and practices and the attitudes of young people toward a host of moral and ethical issues. Generally, religiously committed young people have been found to hold more conservative views and practices in such fields as illicit drug use (Maddox, 1970; Globetti & Brigrance, 1971; Braucht, Brakarsh, Follingstad, & Berry, 1973, Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975; Hadaway, Elifson, & Peterson, 1984; Hundleby, 1987; Francis & Mullen, 1993; Mullen & Francis, 1995; Cook, Goddard, & Westall, 1997; Hope & Cook, 2001; Francis, 2002; Nonnemaker, McNeely, & Blum, 2003; Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, 2003; Mellor & Freeborn, 2011; Sanchez, Opaleye, Chaves, Noto, & Nappo, 2011), the use of alcohol (Schlegel & Sanborn, 1979; Nelson & Rooney, 1982; Hadaway, Elifson, & Peterson, 1984; Perkins, 1985, 1987; Bechtel & Swisher, 1992; Cochran, 1993; Brown, Parks, Zimmerman, & Phillips, 2001; Fawcett & Linkletter, 2007; Brechting, Brown, Salsman, Sauer, & Holeman, 2010; Lambert, Fincham, Marks, & Stillman, 2010), sexual permissiveness (Lindenfeld, 1960; Reiss, 1967; Heltsley & Broderick, 1969; Bell & Chaskes,

1970; Sherkat & Ellison, 1997; Cochran, Chamlin, Beeghley, & Fenwick, 2004; Murray-Swank, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2005; Murray, Ciarrocchi, & Murray-Swank, 2007; Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009; Brelsford, Luguish, & Murray-Swank, 2011), and viewing internet pornography (Rostosky, Wilcox, Wright, & Randall, 2004; Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004; Powell, 2008).

Although, as yet, little research has mapped the connection between religious beliefs and practices and the way in which young people view downloading of copyrighted music, two studies that have examined this issue have failed to demonstrate a connection. In the first study, drawing on a survey of 1,448 American teenagers, Barna (2004) found that 86% possessed no moral qualms about downloading non-promotional music. In the same survey Barna discovered that the views of American teenagers he classified as “born again” are nearly the same as those he classified as “non-born again”. In the second study, Lewer, Gerlich, and Lucas (2008) compared the attitudes of students attending three different types of higher education institutes in the USA: a public university in the Southwest, a small private Christian liberal arts college in the Midwest, and a historically black college in the Southwest. They concluded from these data that ‘Christian education has no effect on ethical attitudes or actual stealing behaviour’ in connection with illegal media file sharing and that faculty at Christian colleges and universities ‘cannot assume that discussions about Christian principles and moral attitudes will automatically be seen in the student behaviour that follows’ (p. 70). Findings of this nature both prompt a closer examination of the teaching offered to Christian young people on this topic and a clearer foundation of empirical research examining the connections between religious beliefs and practices and attitudes toward music copyright theft. Canadian Baptist youth programmes provide one context in which these two issues may be pursued.

Since Canadian Baptist leaders model the utilization of technology in the events and ministries they lead by using websites, videos, laptop computers, data projectors, etc., it would not be unusual to assume that committed Canadian Baptist parents permit their teenage children to have access to a computer and broadband internet as many youth in the broader society do. Given this presumed access and the prevalence of illegal music downloading in the broader society, one might assume that Canadian Baptist leaders would provide some instruction on the issue of illegal music downloads to their young people. However, this does not appear to be the case. Canadian Baptist youth programmes commonly give attention to employing teaching from the Bible to shape the views of youth on social and moral issues. An examination of lists of seminar topics at the denomination's annual Springforth youth conference during the first decade of this century, for instance, indicate attention being given to subjects such as video games, dating, mass media, sports, body image, and movies. No seminars touched on the issue of illegal music downloading. In fact, in spite of the evidence that illegal music downloading has become increasingly common among young people, there is no evidence from any Canadian Baptist publications or events to suggest that Canadian Baptist youth leaders or others have given any attention to the subject in their teaching. Given the apparent absence of teaching on this subject, at least at official denominational events, the researchers wondered if attitudes of Canadian Baptist young people toward illegal music downloading were shaped indirectly by other factors.

**Research agenda**

Against this background, the aim of the present study is to chart the level of acceptance of music copyright theft among young people who are actively involved with the youth ministry programmes of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, a regional Canadian Baptist denomination, and to examine the relative influence of different aspects of their religious experience on shaping views in this area. In particular, attention will be given



to the influence of four specific religious variables: frequency of Sunday church attendance (indicating integrating within the community of faith); frequency of Bible reading (indicating familiarity with the teachings of scripture); frequency of personal prayer (indicating depth of relationship with God); and the degree to which the Bible is regarded as inerrant (indicating strength of conservative Bible believing).

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

Young people attending the annual spring youth conference of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, Springforth, were invited at one of the plenary sessions to participate in the research programme of the denomination's youth department. Participation was voluntary, confidential, anonymous, and given with informed consent, in accordance with the requirements of the ethics committee. Interest in the topic and commitment to the mission of the denomination's youth department resulted in the majority of those attending wishing to participate.

### **Measures**

As part of a larger battery of questions, the participants were invited to assess their religious practices and belief across four areas: frequency of Sunday worship attendance on a five-point scale (nearly every week, several times a month, at least once a month, once in a while, and never); frequency of personal prayer on a five-point scale (nearly every day, at least weekly, at least monthly, occasionally, and never); frequency of personal Bible reading on a five-point scale (nearly every day, at least weekly, at least monthly, occasionally, and never); and level of agreement with the statement, 'The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings' on a five-point scale (agree strongly, somewhat agree, don't know, somewhat disagree, and disagree strongly).

Attitude toward music copyright theft was assessed by level of agreement with the statement, ‘Downloading copyrighted music from the internet without paying’, on a five-point scale (always right, usually right, don’t know, usually wrong, and always wrong). This item is coded so that a high score indicates a rejection of copyright theft.

### **Sample**

A total of 706 participants at Springforth 2005 returned thoroughly completed questionnaires. The respondents comprised 291 males, 414 females, and one participant of undisclosed sex; 135 participants under the age of 16, 290 participants aged 16 or 17, and 121 participants aged 18 or over.

### **Analysis**

The data were analysed by the SPSS statistical package, employing the frequency, correlation, and regression routines.

### **Results**

Table 1 presents the responses of the 706 young Canadian Baptists to the four items concerning religious practices and beliefs. These data demonstrate a high level of religious practice, with 82% attending Sunday worship nearly every week, 79% engaging in personal prayer at least weekly, and 55% engaging in personal Bible reading at least weekly. The data also demonstrate a high level of conservative Christian belief, with 91% agreeing or agreeing strongly with the idea that the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings.

(Insert table 1 here)

Table 2 presents the responses of the 706 young Canadian Baptists to the item concerning music copyright theft. These data demonstrate quite a wide range of opinion among these young people. While 26% believe that downloading copyright music from the internet without paying is ‘always wrong’, another 13% believe it to be ‘always right’. While 18% believe that downloading copyright music from the internet without paying is ‘usually

wrong', another 20% believe it to be 'usually right'. Almost a quarter (23%) of the young people report that they 'don't know', implying that they have not formed a view on this aspect of morality.

(Insert table 2 here)

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlations between the variables employed in the study. In terms of the indicators of religious practice and belief, these data draw attention to important influences of both sex and age: females are more likely than males to attend Sunday worship services, to engage in personal prayer, and to hold a conservative view on the Bible; older youth are more likely than younger youth to attend Sunday worship, to engage in personal prayer, to read the Bible, and to hold a conservative view on the Bible. In terms of the indicator of music copyright theft, these data draw attention to the important influences of both age and religiosity. The judgment that music copyright theft is wrong is more likely among older participants, among those who take a conservative view of scripture, and among those who display high levels of Sunday worship attendance, personal prayer, and personal Bible reading.

(Insert table 3 here)

Table 4 takes the story one step further, employing multiple regression to examine the cumulative impact on attitude toward music copyright theft of sex, age, Sunday worship attendance, personal prayer, personal Bible reading, and conservative Christian belief (entered into the equation in that fixed order). The beta weights demonstrate that, when these predictors are taken into account simultaneously, the three strongest predictors of views on music copyright theft are age, personal Bible reading, and Sunday church attendance. As Canadian Baptist youth mature (grow older), as they become more familiar with Bible teaching (through frequent reading of the scriptures), and as they become more integrated within the community of faith (through frequent Sunday church attendance), so they take a

tougher line against music copyright theft. After frequency of Bible reading and frequency of Sunday attendance have been taken into account, according to the beta weights no additional predictive power is provided by the further variables, namely personal prayer and Bible believing.

(Insert table 4 here)

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study set out to chart the level of acceptance of music copyright theft among young people who are actively involved with the youth ministry programmes of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, and to examine the relative influence of different aspects of their religious experience on shaping views in this area. Two main conclusions emerge from the study.

The first conclusion concerns the level of acceptance of music copyright theft among this group of religiously involved young people. Only one in four (26%) considered that downloading copyright music from the internet without paying is always wrong. In this sense, moral absolutes within this area have been adopted by only a minority of religiously committed Baptist youth. Given the importance attributed to moral leadership within the educational programmes offered to young people by Canadian Baptist churches, this finding highlights the need for the denomination to address this issue with greater seriousness.

The second conclusion concerns the way in which individual differences in the level of acceptance of music copyright theft among young Baptists is directly related to three factors: age, personal Bible reading, and Sunday church attendance. As Canadian Baptist youth mature (grow older), as they become more familiar with Bible teaching (through frequent reading of the scriptures), and as they become more integrated within the community of faith (through frequent Sunday church attendance), so they take a tougher line against copyright theft. In this sense, there is evidence to suggest that greater exposure to the

recognised sources of religious socialisation is reflected in a higher level of espousal of moral absolutes in this field, as in the cognate fields reviewed above, including the use of alcohol, illicit drug use, sexual permissiveness, and viewing internet pornography. It is likely, therefore, that, if church teaching were to give more attention to sensitising young people to the moral dimensions of such activity, the churches could exercise greater influence on strengthening the resolve of their young members against endorsing music copyright theft in the future.

If church teaching were to focus more seriously on this issue, a future replication of the present study would be in a strong position to detect whether or not there was a perceptible shift in the attitude of Baptist youth to the practice of music copyright theft.

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Table 1: Religious practices and belief

	%
Sunday worship attendance	
nearly every week	82
several times a month	6
at least once a month	3
once in a while	6
never	3
Personal prayer	
nearly every day	62
at least weekly	17
at least monthly	3
occasionally	13
never	5
Personal Bible reading	
nearly every day	29
at least weekly	26
at least monthly	11
occasionally	25
never	10
The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings	
agree strongly	72
somewhat agree	19
don't know	7
somewhat disagree	1
disagree strongly	1

Table 2: Music copyright theft

	%
Downloading copyright music from the internet without paying is	
always wrong	26
usually wrong	18
don't know	23
usually right	20
always right	13

Table 3: Correlation matrix

	Music	BB	BR	PP	CA	Age
Sex	-.05	-.17***	-.05	-.08*	-.12**	-.02
Age	.25***	.13***	.20***	.17***	.09*	
Church attendance (CA)	.25***	.31***	.37***	.36***		
Personal prayer (PP)	.27***	.37***	.62***			
Bible reading (BR)	.33***	.35***				
Bible believing (BB)	.20***					

Note: a high score on 'music' indicates rejection of copyright theft.

Table 4: Multiple regression model: music copyright theft

	$r^2$	increase			$\beta$	$t$	$p <$
		$r^2$	$F$	$p <$			
Sex	0.002	0.002	1.7	NS	-.009	0.3	NS
Age	0.065	0.062	46.7	.001	.175	4.9	.001
Sunday attendance	0.114	0.050	39.3	.001	.124	3.2	.001
Personal prayer	0.141	0.027	22.1	.001	.068	1.5	NS
Bible reading	0.161	0.019	16.0	.001	.177	3.8	.001
Bible believing	0.163	0.002	2.0	NS	.054	1.4	NS